Work Group Activities

Please use the following feedback form and complete using the designated roles. All questions need to be answered in the allotted time period.

Activity One (20 Minutes)
Funding Decisions (Area/County Level)

The purpose of this activity is to help DECAL identify criteria and/or data for selecting **counties/areas** of the state where Pre-K classes may have to be closed**.**

1. Considering data limitations and the needs for transparency, fairness, and being child-centered, how should DECAL *approach* the challenge of identifying counties/areas for possible class closure? What should be the foremost considerations?

   The most common theme seems to be that DECAL needs to quickly identify the sites that will voluntarily close. The groups also noted that DECAL needs to look at the whole picture in an area and that it may be difficult to approach all areas the same way. Many groups also listed additional data sources. These are detailed in the subsequent question below.

   Specific points include:
   A. **There needs to be a way to determine schools that will voluntarily give up a class as soon as possible.**
   B. **Classes should not be closed if there is a defined need in the area. There may be a need to look at each area individually.**
   C. **It is hard to make a one size fits all approach, especially when looking at metro and rural area considerations. Some areas are just too spread out and parents may not take advantage of other programs if they are too far away.**
   D. **Some consideration should be given to redistributing between public and private sites within certain geographic areas.**
   E. **At the program level, there should be a look at programs that are not in compliance, have not met the standards, falsified data, and have low enrollment. Classes that have not been full for the last 2 out of 3 years may need to be considered.**
   F. **High poverty rates in counties should be a consideration.**

2. In determining geographic areas of the state where DECAL may need to close classes, should the following be considered?

   A. Waiting Lists:
      All groups noted that this was data that should be used. This does give a true raw number of children not being served, as long as duplicates are removed. There was a suggestion of looking at the percentage of waiting lists compared to the total number of slots.

      Groups did mention that the waiting list data was not without problems. Some questioned the accuracy of the data and noted that some programs (and counties) are better at sharing the waiting list. One group advocated for more regulation to ensure the accuracy of the data entry process. Some also mentioned that parents may not provide complete information and this makes the waiting list harder to use.

Bottom line: Waiting lists are a good source for indicating need but are not a perfect piece of data. DECAL may want to look at ways of improving this process.

B. Saturation Rates:
As with the waiting lists, all of the groups indicated that this was a valid data source. DECAL should look at closing classes in areas where there is a high saturation rate and not in areas with a low rate. Groups noted that the saturation rate differs from the actual demand for Pre-K. For example, the saturation rate does not take into account private Pre-K, Head Start, or home schooled children. Furthermore, it does not take into account the fact that many children may attend Pre-K in a different county from where they reside.

Bottom line: Saturation rates can be used, but the limitations should be noted.

C. Poverty Rates:
All groups recommended using this as a source, though there may be better indicators (e.g., free/reduced lunch) than this one. Many groups felt strongly about including a poverty measure. One group noted that this was the group that the program was initially designed to serve and that we need to ensure that at-risk children get consideration.

Bottom line: Poverty measures should be included in any regional analysis. However, this measure may not be the best one. (All of the suggestions will be listed below.)

D. 3rd Grade Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) Scores:
Many groups noted that this was a great addition. It is closer to the age of Pre-K children and is a good measure of school success. Many groups mentioned that math should be included. Groups also asked how this can be used in tracking how children from Pre-K are doing compared to children who did not attend the program.[1] Some groups did raise a concern that this could have the end result of penalizing school systems with high CRCT scores, thus hurting the program.

Bottom line: A good addition to the formula, but should encompass more than reading.

E. Graduation Rates:
Most groups supported using graduation rates, though the general consensus was that measures closer to Pre-K (e.g.-CRCT) are better indicators. One group noted that this was the end goal and one where we should remain focused. However, since there was a length of time between graduation and Pre-K, there was less enthusiasm for this data. With the upcoming change in computing the graduation rate, one group wondered whether this would be as valid.

Bottom line: Good data source, but not as strong as the other ones mentioned.

3. Of the data listed above, which should be weighted the highest?

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[1] Now that the GTID is assigned at the Pre-K level, we can start to measure this. It will be several more years before the first full cohort that was assigned the GTID at the Pre-K level reaches 3rd grade.

The results were equally distributed between waiting lists, saturation rates, and some type of poverty measure. Most thought that some type of poverty measure should be included even if they rated the waiting list or saturation rate as the most important.

4. What data is missing? Are there other pieces of data that should be included?

   A. **Free and Reduced Lunch (most mentioned)**
   B. **Math CRCT**
   C. **Unemployment rates**
   D. **Retention rates**
   E. **Special needs services**
   F. **Department of Juvenile Justice statistics**
   G. **Formal feedback**
   H. **Birth rates**
   I. **Teen moms**
   J. **Low birth weights**
   K. **Head Start**
   L. **ESL population**
   M. **GKIDS data**
   N. **Title One schools**
   O. **Kids Count data**
   P. **IQ Checklist and other compliance data**
   Q. **Multiple year data (for example look at trends in school district data)**
   R. **Alternative school ratio in county (some is for academic reasons and some for behavior)**

5. General comments about selecting counties of the state where there could be possibilities for closing classes.

   A. **There needs to be a look at the number of classes within a center. There is a need to keep the program in a diverse number of settings.**
   B. **Why is BFTS adding two more slots per class and yet closing 300 classes?**
   C. **There is a need to ensure that at-risk children have the opportunity to attend Pre-K.**
   D. **Continue to receive formal feedback from providers**

Activity Two: Funding Decisions (Program Level)
The purpose of this activity is to help DECAL identify criteria and/or data for selecting **programs** where Pre-K classes may have to be closed.

1. Considering data limitations and the need for transparency, fairness, and being child-centered, how should DECAL *approach* the challenge of identifying programs for possible class closure? What should be the foremost considerations?

   The groups mentioned several aspects but they all related to program quality, performance, and longevity as the foremost considerations. When looking at compliance history it is important to look at the center as a whole, not just Pre-K. Groups also mentioned that there needs to be a method for determining how many programs are going to voluntarily give up classes and there needs to be better ways to look at where children actually live.

2. In determining programs where DECAL may need to close classes, should the following be considered?

   A. Zip Code Waiting Lists
      This is important for large, populous counties but less relevant in other counties. This also reflects how parents live and work within the county. In many places, this is better than looking at waiting lists by county.

      Bottom Line: This should definitely be used when looking at the larger counties.

   B. Probation:
      Groups felt strongly that this was an important data source while raising concerns about the process. Probation does identify programs struggling with quality but there may be inconsistency in the way that it is administered. Groups noted that many probation programs have made improvements and sites could be on probation for something other than quality. One group suggested that DECAL have a method for determining whether a program's probation status was a program issue or a teacher issue.

      Many providers also feel that there is disparity between consultants. One group noted that the switch from the PQA to the CLASS is problematic and that there is not an appeal process. The fact that some consultants have more probation sites than others may indicate a reliability issue.

      Bottom Line: Can be a good data source, but there is a need to ensure that the process is administered equitably.

   C. Low Rosters:
      Low rosters suggest poor quality or no market demand. In some cases, it may be because the need is not there. One group noted that low rosters may indicate a need for transportation services not low quality. Groups also noted the importance in looking at trends in low rosters or looking over a longer period of time.

      Bottom Line: This can be a good source of identifying low quality or programs where there is not the demand.

D. Child Care Services (CCS)/Nutrition Non-Compliance:
The groups supported this as a data point. Some even said that it should be weighted higher than probation since it reflects basic standards. One group noted nutrition compliance should not be weighted as heavily. As with probation, there is a concern about the equity of inspections between consultants (not just Pre-K consultants).

One group noted chronic non-compliance mainly in terms of quality issues throughout the entire program. This group only felt that administrative issues should be considered if there seemed to be no effort to improve.

3. Of the data listed above, which should be weighted the highest?
The groups were divided on this one. Three groups said that low rosters were the most important piece of data, while four groups specifically noted probation. Two groups mentioned compliance and one group said program quality.

4. What data are missing? Are there other pieces of data that should be included?

A. **Program quality**
B. **Saturation rates at the program level**
C. **Churn/turnover within programs rosters/programs**
D. **Accreditation data**
E. **Program effectiveness data (pre and post tests)**
F. **Teacher turnover**

5. General comments:

A. **Please reevaluate the criteria for Category One and Two.**
B. **Programs that are successful should have the top priority.**
C. **Programs should be held accountable based on performance and non-compliance.**
D. **Some of this data may be skewed due to the inconsistency of the consultants both within Pre-K and between programs. Do we know the impact of the consultant?**
E. **Consider the quality and longevity of the program. Particularly if rosters are historically low.**
F. **Many programs feel that there is still inconsistency between consultants.**
G. **There needs to be consideration given to how the increase to 22 children per class will impact programs with low waiting lists and low enrollment.**
H. **One group noted that the probation process should be N.E.A.T. (notify, explain problem, offer assistance, timeline; if not corrected in a timely manner the program should be closed).**
I. **Consider locations that are isolated geographically; filling 22 slots may be difficult.**

<u>Activity Three</u>: Payment Schedules/Roster Submission/Other Funding Issues

1. Of the three options reviewed, which would best meet the needs of Georgia's Pre-K providers? Please explain your choice. It is important to note that the PANDA payment system precludes different payment/roster schedules for providers. In other words, everyone has to be on the same payment schedule/roster schedule.
All of the groups chose Option One. One table did provide the vote tally and that table had two people vote for Option Two. Most groups noted that Option One gives more flexibility and provides an August payment which is especially needed for salaries. Some groups reported that several members were ok with all of the options while others were adamant about Option One.

2. In what areas do providers need greater flexibility in allocating Pre-K funds? Are there areas in which greater restrictions are needed?
   A. **Minimize micro management.**
   B. **Lead and assistant teacher pay should be more flexible within guidelines to allow more experienced, higher performing teachers to be paid more than less experienced, lower performing teachers.**
   C. **Allow providers to submit own budgets for approval.**
   D. **Eliminate technology funding requirement or provide funding for it.**
   E. **More flexibility with instructional funds.**
   F. **More flexibility with calendar, specifically planning day.**
   G. **More flexibility with lesson planning.**
   H. **Allow more flexibility for spending on classroom supplies.**
   I. **Allow flexibility in meal fees for Category Two families.**
   J. **Allow programs to charge Category Two families for supplies.**
   K. **Cut out expense for travel and substitutes related to training. Look at webinars for training except for new teachers and directors.**
   L. **Charges to parents in order to replace the reduced income.**
   M. **Allow programs to spend supply money on technology and playground equipment without BFTS approval.**
   N. **Look at the 6% administration cost. Could be used for social workers.**
   O. **Reconciliation process needs to be revised**.
   P. **Program rate should be based on the number of days in the program**.

3. Are there any other roster/ payment issues that need to be addressed?
   A. **Long-term subs are costly.**
   B. **Professional Development Registry – why? It is very time consuming.**
   C. **Align content standards/work sampling indicators.**
   D. **More accountability on parents. It costs too much money to prepare for students who do not show up. There is a need for DECAL to address parents pulling children from a program when a slot opens at a different site. Since this is parent choice, group recommended requiring a process for the parents to request the move – basically just an opportunity for them to be educated on the impact to the child – this is important in cases where there is not a need (like transportation) and rather just the parent looking to move the child to their 1ˢᵗ desired location. The group looked at this as an opportunity to maintain parent choice, but to educate them on the pros and cons of making an unnecessary switch.**

E. Limit number of places a family registers. Have a nominal registration fee to enroll at a facility. This could be refunded after first roster after enrollment.
F. Look at redundancy in training.
G. Work Sampling Online is too time consuming. It uses too much space on the server and Kindergarten teachers cannot access it. It is not user friendly for parent/teacher conferences.
H. The lesson plan template needs revisions. It takes too much time and adds to teacher's paperwork.
I. Allocation of teacher work days. Could some money be used for instructional days?
J. Change the number of required days during the week.
K. Programs are penalized when parents move their child. The $1/20^{th}$ reduction is not proportionate to the fixed cost of running the program.
L. DECAL needs to have transitional plans in place when classes are closed.